



## South Dakota Department of the Military South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



# SUMMER FUN FOR OUR VETERANS AT MJFSVH

James Dent once said, "A perfect summer day is when the sun is shining, the breeze is blowing, the birds are singing, and the lawn mower is broken!"

Residents at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home don't have to wait for the lawn mower to break; they have a great activity director, Laura Inman, that ensures they get out and enjoy summer fun. In fact, this week the MJFSVH residents enjoyed a wonderful picnic at Lakota Lake.

Summertime affords our residents the opportunity to watch movies in the park, view sunsets from the porch, dive into an ice cream sundae, sample some goodies from the grill, savor some water melon, take a nap in the hammock, enjoy a bonfire, do some fishing, and cheer on a baseball team.

Laura ensures there is never a quiet moment for our heroes!



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## VA INITIATIVE FOCUSES ON COMBATING FRAUD, WASTE AND ABUSE

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) announced it will launch the "Seek to Prevent Fraud, Waste and Abuse (STOP FWA)" initiative that will capitalize on existing departmental activities that prevent or identify FWA, as well as ensure a consistent approach to FWA risk management as a way to centralize organizational resources.

"The VA will create an organizational culture that is committed to STOP FWA," said VA Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin. "The initiative will protect the resources that deliver services and benefits our nation's veterans have earned."

Historically, the VA has had a decentralized approach to identifying, responding, and preventing FWA. For example, the VA's three administrations — Health, Benefits, and Cemetery — as well as its various staff offices all had separate budgets and programs dedicated to preventing FWA.

Under the decentralized approach, the VA's Office of Community Care prevented \$27 million of potentially fraudulent payments in fiscal year 2016 and the VA's Debt Management Center referred more than \$11 million in potentially fraudulent activity, so far in this fiscal year.

STOP FWA's centralized approach will consolidate the VA's resources under one organization to achieve even greater success. The department-wide effort will eliminate duplicative activities and explore potential partnerships with other federal agencies to capitalize on their successes in detecting fraud, waste and abuse.

Finally, the VA will establish a Prevention of Fraud Waste and Abuse Advisory Committee by July 2017. Secretary Shulkin is developing a list of potential co-chairs and committee members, and the department will also seek committee members through the Federal Register.

The committee will provide insight into lessons learned and private-sector practices; identify analytical tools that can be used at the VA to prevent FWA; and leverage a deep wealth of experience in building mature, effective STOP FWA programs that protect VA's resources.



**SIoux FALLS STORM** **DAKOTALAND AUTOGLASS**

# SALUTE TO MILITARY NIGHT

**JUNE 10TH @ 7:05PM • STORM VS DANGER**

All current and retired military personnel receive a **FREE** ticket and can purchase **\$5** tickets for family & friends.

Visit the Premier Center Box Office to get your ticket.

**MUST PRESENT ID TO PREMIER CENTER BOX OFFICE • BOX OFFICE HOURS: MON-FRI, 10AM-5PM**



## SDNG MECHANICS VITAL IN PILOTS, FLIGHT CREW SAFETY

Aviation mechanics play a vital role in ensuring the safety of the National Guard's pilots and flight crews.

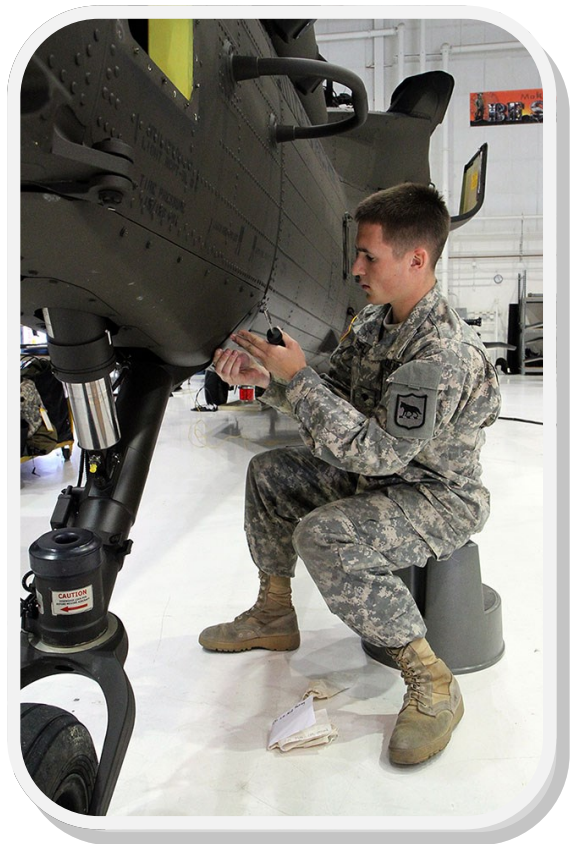
In the South Dakota Army National Guard, it is the mechanics of the Rapid City-based Detachment 1, Company B, 935th Aviation Support Battalion, who provide high-level aviation maintenance and repair support for the aircraft and aircraft systems.

Every 360 flight hours, aircraft go through a phase maintenance inspection. This involves major disassembly and inspection of critical components. Worn or damaged components are then repaired or replaced as the aircraft is put back together. This process can take up to two months to complete.

The nearly 30-member detachment is made up of general, shops and avionics mechanics. Each type of mechanic specializes in inspecting and repairing different equipment and systems on HH-60M Black Hawk and UH-72 Lakota helicopters.

To become a mechanic, most soldiers spend three or more months in training, learning about the aircraft. Mechanics who specialize in working with electrical or avionics attend a longer school.

While aircraft maintenance and repair is often a behind the scenes role, the SDARNG aviation mechanics play a big part in helping save lives by ensuring the reliability and efficiency of the Army's aircraft.



## WALL OF HONOR REDEDICATED/RELOCATED

War memorials can be found everywhere in the world. They are buildings, monuments, and statues built to honor our men and women who stepped out of the crowd and swore an oath to support and defend the constitution of the United States of America against all enemies.

These memorials should be a constant reminder to the nation of the great debt to society that we owe our veterans for our way of life.

Last Friday SDDVA and SDDOM staff participated in the rededication ceremony of the South Dakota Hall of Honor. We were honored to have Mike and Patty Fitzmaurice join us at the dedication. Mike is the only living SD Medal of Honor recipient.

The Hall of Honor, which recognizes South Dakota veterans who have been awarded the Medal of Honor, was recently redesigned and relocated from the Soldiers and Sailors Building to the State Capitol.

The Hall of Honor pays tribute to nine heroes whose actions exemplify the finest qualities of the American soldier — steadfast devotion to duty, tenacity in a fight, and love and respect for each other. They exemplified the warrior spirit that is essential to win in tough battles, and they proved what true warriors can do when faced head-on with the ultimate sacrifice. Their bravery, their resourcefulness and their patriotism marks them as America's finest heroes.

Spencer Kimball once said, "I promise that if you will keep your journals and records, they will indeed be a source of great inspiration

to your families, your children, your grandchildren, and others. Each of us is important to those who are near and dear to us and as our posterity reads of our life's experiences, they, too, will come to know and love us."

We ask all of you to learn first-hand the entries in the journals of - General Patrick H. Brady, Brigadier General Charles D. Roberts, Colonel Leo K. Thorsness, Captain Willibald C. Bianchi, Captain Joe J. Foss, Captain Arlo L. Olson, Master Sergeant Woodrow W. Keeble, Specialist Four Michael J. Fitzmaurice, and Private First Class Herbert A. Littleton.

View the new Hall of Honor or read their citations on line at: <http://vetaffairs.sd.gov/resources/medal%20of%20honor.aspx>.

Their loyalty and leadership made them a cornerstone of this country. As Douglas MacArthur once said, "From one end of the world to the other (the American soldier) has drained deep the chalice of courage."



Mike and Patty Fitzmaurice



## NEW TOOL HELPS VETERANS LEARN ABOUT AND COMPARE EFFECTIVE PTSD TREATMENTS

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) launched a new online tool that will help veterans compare various treatment options for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

The PTSD Treatment Decision Aid is a free, interactive online tool that helps educate patients about effective treatment options for PTSD and encourages them to participate actively in decisions about their care.

“The health and well-being of the courageous men and women who have served their country in uniform is the VA’s highest priority,” said VA Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin. “The PTSD Treatment Decision Aid is an important step in putting veterans in control of their health care. By helping to bridge understanding and communication between veterans and providers about the most effective treatment options available, we are ensuring veterans receive the treatments that best promote their healing and recovery.”

The tool includes information about evidence-based PTSD treatments, such as talk therapy and prescription medication options. It also includes useful information designed for people who have served in the military. Users can watch videos of providers explaining different treatment options and what to expect with those treatments, and hear from veterans who have benefited from them.

Veterans can also build a chart to compare the treatments they prefer and print a personalized summary to share with their providers. All personal information is erased once the tool is closed to protect users’ privacy.

According to the VA findings, approximately eight of every 100 people will experience PTSD at some point in their lifetimes, and almost 620,000 of the veterans treated by the VA have a diagnosis of PTSD.

“We know from research and our own clinical experience that veterans can recover and improve their quality of life with the right PTSD treatment plan,” said Dr. Poonam Alaigh, VA’s Acting Under Secretary for Health. “We want our veterans and those who care for them to have access to effective treatment options. Knowing about the latest research can help them get the best care possible.”

To learn more about PTSD visit the National Center for PTSD website at [www.ptsd.va.gov](http://www.ptsd.va.gov). Health-care providers who have questions about the PTSD Treatment Decision Aid or other free resources can email the PTSD Consultation Program at [PTSDconsult@va.gov](mailto:PTSDconsult@va.gov) or call 866-948-7880.



## VA SECRETARY ANNOUNCES DECISION ON NEXT GENERATION ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORD

U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. David J. Shulkin announced his decision on the next-generation Electronic Health Record (EHR) system for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) at a news briefing at VA headquarters in Washington. Secretary Shulkin's full statement is contained below and on the next two pages.

I am here today to announce my decision on the future of the VA's Electronic Health Record system, otherwise known as EHR.

I wanted to say at the outset that from the day he selected me for this position, the President made clear that we're going to do things differently for our veterans, to include in the area of EHR. I had said previously that I would be making a decision on our EHR by July 1st, and I am honoring that commitment today.

The health and safety of our veterans is one of our highest national priorities. Having a veteran's complete and accurate health record in a single common EHR system is critical to that care, and to improving patient safety. Let me say at the outset that I am extremely proud of the VA's longstanding history in IT innovation and in leading the country in advancing the use of EHRs.

- It was a group of courageous VA clinicians that began this groundbreaking work in the basements of the VA's in the 1970's that led to the system that we have today, known as the Veterans Health Information Systems and Technology Architecture, or VistA.
- It has been this system that led to the incredible achievements made by the VA clinicians and researchers and resulted in the VA's ability to perform as well or better than the private sector in patient safety and quality of care.

That said, our current VistA system is in need of major modernization to keep pace with the improvements in health information technology and cybersecurity, and software development is not a core competency of VA.

I said recently to Congress that I was committed to getting the VA out of the software business, that I didn't see remaining in that business as benefitting veterans. And, because of that, we're making a decision to move towards a commercial off-the-shelf product. I have not come to this decision on EHR lightly. I have reviewed numerous studies, reports and commissions, on this topic, including the recent commission on care report.

- I've spent time talking with clinicians, and I use our legacy VistA system myself as a current practicing VA physician.
- We have consulted with Chief Information Officers from around the country, and I've met personally with CEO's from leading health systems to get their own thoughts on the best next-generation EHR for the VA.
- We've studied reports from management consulting companies and from the GAO and the IG on VA's IT systems.

I can count no fewer than seven Blue Ribbon Commissions, and a large number of congressional hearings that have called for the VA to modernize its approach to IT.

At the VA, we know where almost all of our veteran patients are going to come from — from the DoD, and for this reason, Congress has been urging the VA and DoD for at least 17 years — from all the way back in 2000 — to work more closely on EHR issues.

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## ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORDS (CONTINUED)

To date, the VA and DoD have not adopted the same EHR system. Instead, the VA and DoD have worked together for many years to advance EHR interoperability between their many separate applications — at the cost of several hundred millions of dollars — in an attempt to create a consistent and accurate view of individual medical record information.

While we have established interoperability between the VA and DoD for key aspects of the health record, seamless care is fundamentally constrained by ever-changing information sharing standards, separate chains of command, complex governance, separate implementation schedules that must be coordinated to accommodate those changes from separate program offices that have separate funding appropriations, and a host of related complexities requiring constant lifecycle maintenance. And the bottom line is we still don't have the ability to trade information seamlessly for our veteran patients and seamlessly execute a share plan with smooth handoffs.

Without improved and consistently implemented national interoperability standards, the VA and DoD will continue to face significant challenges if the Departments remain on two different systems. For these reasons, I have decided that the VA will adopt the same EHR system as DoD, now known as MHS GENESIS, which at its core consists of Cerner Millennium.

VA's adoption of the same EHR system as DoD will ultimately result in all patient data residing in one common system and enable seamless care between the Departments without the manual and electronic exchange and reconciliation of data between two separate systems.

It's time to move forward, and as Secretary I was not willing to put this decision off any longer. When DoD went through this acquisition process in 2014 it took far too long. The entire EHR acquisition process, starting from requirements generation until contract award, took approximately 26 months. We simply can't afford to wait that long when it comes to the health of our veterans.

Because of the urgency and the critical nature of this decision, I have decided that there is a public interest exception to the requirement for full and open competition in this technology acquisition. Accordingly, under my authority as Secretary of Veterans Affairs, I have signed what is known as a "Determination and Findings," or D&F, that is a special form of written approval by an authorized official that is required by statute or regulation as a prerequisite to taking certain contract actions.

The D&F notes that there is a public interest exception to the requirement for full and open competition, and determines that the VA may issue a solicitation directly to Cerner Corporation for the acquisition of the EHR system currently being deployed by DoD, for deployment and transition across the VA enterprise in a manner that meets VA needs, and which will enable seamless healthcare to veterans and qualified beneficiaries.

Additionally, we have looked at the need for the VA to adopt significant cybersecurity enhancements, and we intend to leverage the architecture, tools and processes that have already been put in place to protect DoD data, to include both physical and virtual separation from commercial clients.

This D&F action is only done in particular circumstances when the public interest demands it, and that's clearly the case here. Once again, for the reasons of the health and protection of our veterans, I have decided that we can't wait years, as DoD did in its EHR acquisition process, to get our next generation EHR in place.

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## ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORDS (CONTINUED)

Let me say what lies ahead, as this is just the beginning of the process.

- VA has unique needs and many of those are different from the DoD.
- For this reason, the VA will not simply be adopting the identical EHR that DoD uses, but we intend to be on a similar Cerner platform.
- VA clinicians will be very involved in how this process moves forward and in the implementation of the system.
- In many ways the VA is well ahead of DoD in clinical IT innovations and we will not discard our past work. And our work will help DoD in turn.
- Furthermore the VA must obtain interoperability with DoD but also with our academic affiliates and community partners, many of whom are on different IT platforms.
- Therefore we are embarking on creating something that has not been done before — that is an integrated product that, while utilizing the DoD platform, will require a meaningful integration with other vendors to create a system that serves veterans in the best possible way.
- This is going to take the cooperation and involvement of many companies and leaders, and can serve as a model for the federal government and all of healthcare.

Once again, I want to thank the President for his incredible commitment to helping our veterans and his support for our team here at the VA as we undertake this important work. This is an exciting new phase for VA, DOD, and for the country. Our mission is too important not to get this right and we will.

## TELEHEALTH VAN TO VISIT SFVAHCS

On Friday, June 9, a telehealth van will make a stop at the Sioux Falls Dept. of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center to showcase new and innovative ways the VA provides patient care for veterans using this technology.

The van's visit is also an opportunity for veterans and their families to learn how convenient telehealth technology is, especially for veterans who live in rural areas. Education and demonstrations will be ongoing from 11:00 AM - 3:00 PM (CT), and the van will be in the parking lot in front of the medical center at 2501 W. 22nd Street.

VA staff will also be on hand to help explain how veterans' can be only a computer or tablet away from receiving VA health care, including mental health and specialty care, including dermatology, audiology, women's health, spinal cord injury, wound care, and more.

In addition, veterans are encouraged to visit to learn more about other services available to them.





# Upcoming Events

Jun 10—SD Marine Corps League Annual Meeting—Pierre Post 8 (520 W. Pierre Street) - 10:00 am (CT)  
Jun 14—US Dept of Veterans Affairs Call Center Grand Opening—Hot Springs Campus—10:00 am (MT)  
Jun 15-18—SD American Legion State Conference—Watertown—Ramkota  
Jun 22-25—State VFW Convention—Pierre—Ramkota  
Jun 28—Black Hills Veterans Job Fair—Western Dakota Tech  
Jul 14—VABHHCS VSO Congressional Forum—Building 145—Room 108—Fort Meade—10:00 am (MT)  
Aug 14-17—SDDVA Annual Benefits School—Pierre—Ramkota  
Aug 31—Veterans Day at the South Dakota State Fair  
Sept 11—VA Black Hills Mental Health Summit

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